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ABSTRACT

A survey of reference librarians working in 114 public libraries in metropolitan Chicago was conducted in 1983 to determine their acceptance of specific community information and referral (I&R) services, as defined by Thomas Childers in his nationwide survey of public libraries in 1978. A total of 106 responses to the 1983 survey were received. Most respondents reported that I&R was an appropriate service for public libraries to offer and that there was no significant difference between I&R and reference services. However, only some of the I&R services defined by Childers received positive ratings from the librarians, including simple and complex information provision, the construction of a public resource file, passive advice, and the provision of formal feedback on social service needs to social agencies. I&R services receiving negative ratings included referral, transporting or escorting inquirers to outside services, direct counseling of inquirers, active advice, advocacy, and follow-up to ensure that inquirers received the proper help. It was concluded that the acceptance of the I&R concept and the concomitant rejection of specific non-traditional I&R services indicated the lack of a widely accepted definition for I&R in a public library setting. Childers' definitions of I&R services, a sample questionnaire, and an 11-item bibliography are provided. (ESR)

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES: A SURVEY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE LIBRARY SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF ARTS

BY
SARAH FAITH O'BRIEN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
AUGUST, 1983

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ABSTRACT

At times there appears to be a conflict between how Information and Referral services are described in the literature and how the phrase Information and Referral is understood by librarians. This thesis examines what services public librarians think they should offer to the community, whether or not they presently offer them.

An account of the background and development of Information and Referral in the public library setting is included in the paper. The concept of Information and Referral originated in the field of Social Welfare. As librarians became interested in the concept, they modified it. In order to understand what is meant by Information and Referral in a public library setting, it is helpful to review the library literature on Information and Referral over the last twenty years.

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INTRODUCTION

At times there appears to be a conflict between how Information and Referral services are described in the literature and how the phrase Information and Referral is understood by librarians. This paper explores whether public librarians perceive the services described by Childers' research team to be services which a public library should offer.

Information and Referral is a common phrase in library journals. Research in this area has been hampered by the lack of a concrete definition for Information and Referral in the public library. Dr. Thomas Childers, in his most recent study of Information and Referral,[1] used a list of possible services as an operational definition of Information and Referral in a public library setting. The preliminary findings of his study show that few of the services on the list are currently offered by public libraries. However, many libraries say they offer an Information and Referral service to the community.[2]

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[1]Dr. Thomas Childers is one of the leading researchers in this aspect of Public library service.

[2]Thomas Childers, "Trends in Public Library Information and Referral Services," Library Journal 104 (October 1979): 2035.

The Library Services Survey was designed as part of this project. The Survey was mailed to reference librarians working in the public libraries in the North Suburban Library System and Suburban Library System. The member libraries of the NSLS and the SLS form a suburban arc around the city of Chicago. The high response rate (88 percent) indicates great interest in the topic of Information and Referral. Responses to the survey indicate that Information and Referral means various things to the respondents. The major findings are that)1 the majority of respondents (63, or 67 percent)[1] think there is no significant difference between Information and Referral and reference service and 2) there is very little support among these librarians for establishing any of the non-traditional services described in Childers' research.

An account of the background and development of Information and Referral in the public library setting is included in the paper. The concept of Information and Referral originated in the field of Social Welfare. As librarians became interested in the concept, they modified it. In order to understand what is meant by Information and Referral in a public library setting, it is helpful to review the library literature or Information and Referral over the last twenty years.

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[1]There were 106 responses to the survey, or 88 percent response rate.

BACKGROUND

What is Information and Referral?

In the field of Social Welfare, the phase Information and Referral is used to describe a service which helps to guide patrons through the maze of social service agencies. The Encyclopedia of Social Work[1] offers this description:

> Ordinarily, these centers provice a place to which interested or troubled people can go to get information and guidance or referral to appropriate services. Although these centers are geared to brief exchanges and the provision of information, literature, and referrals, they can also offer more extended counseling if professional staff or specially trained paraprofessionals are available.

Typically an Information and Referral service serves a dual function. It provides information to patrons who have questions about specific agencies. Ideally, an Information and Referral service provides the most current information about social services available to the community. The Information and Referral service also functions as a diagnostic agency. Social workers staffing an Information an Information and Referral service attempt to provide the

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[1] Encyclopedia of Social Work, Addiction:Drug 54 (1977):39.

patron with more than information about services which are available. The Information and Referral staff attempts to assist the Patron to solve his problem. This help usually begins with a staff member recommending the most appropriate agency for the patron to consult. The staff member, would continue to consult with and assist the patron until the problem is resolved. There are many different types of Information and Referral centers offering various levels of service.

Alfred Kahn et al., 1961[1]

Alfred Kahn's study Neighborhood Information Centers (1961), demonstrated the need for an agency to centralize social service information. The first phase of his study consisted of the use of a group of volunteers, who were given a set of standard inquiries and a list of social service agencies. Using the telephone, the volunteers contacted agencies seeking an answer to the questions they were assigned to ask. The volunteers recorded the number of phone calls and the amount of time required to receive either an answer to the question or an offer of help. Approximately one-third of all the inquiries eventually reached a dead end.

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[1]Alfred Kahn, Neighborhood Information Centers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961).

> A group of well educated volunteers, competent in the use of the telephone and with easy access to it, tested the information system for us by calling agencies in a designated order making standard, set inquiries. Many inquiries required a number of phone calls and much persistence before help was given. Many other inquiries led to a dead end. In fact, one-third of all attempts ended without conclusive answers or offers of help. The average request required 3.5 telephone calls and considerable time, thus reflecting agencies specialized functions and rather narrow conceptions of their responsibilities. Agencies rendering one specific type of service often seem to know nothing about other fields of service, even related fields. In fact, even within a given field an agency may know little about services other than its own.[1]

The volunteers who were involved in the first phase of the study were intelligent people with easy access to the telephone and a set of places to call. The one-third failure rate may be assumed to be higher for the general population. Those most in need of information, especially about social services, are not usually well-educated and probably do not have a list of agencies to call for help.

Kahn suggested the problem might be overcome by the development of Neighborhood Information Centers based on the British Citizen's Advice Bureaux. Citizen's Advice Bureaux were created during World War II in an attempt to provide citizens with reliable information during the crisis. The stated purpose is "to make available to the individual accurate information and skilled advice on the many problems that arise in everyday life; to explain legislation; to help

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[1]Ibid., p. 16.

the citizen benefit from and use wisely the services provided to him by the state."[1]

The bureaux are staffed 70 percent with trained volunteers from the neighborhoods in which the centers are located. The workers are trained to

> answer requests for any type of information, listen to problems, make home visits, fill out forms or write letters for the inquirer, or make informal referrals to public or voluntary agencies and to specialists such as lawyers. They are supplied with a comprehensive directory of social legislation, rules, regulations, and instructions on how to use these laws. Guides to resources, public and voluntary, are available to those in need of help.[2]

The information files at the neighborhood Citizen's Advice Bureaux are updated and co-ordinated by the national Citizen's Advice Bureau Office. Individual Citizen's Advice Bureaux are supported by "local committees of citizens and representatives of public and voluntary agencies in their areas."[3] Their relationship to the national agency is on a purely voluntary basis.

Kahn's study suggested that a similar system of neighborhood centers which would co-ordinate the services available to the community as well as provide a range of counseling and referral services be developed in the United States.

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[1]Ibid., p. 17.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 18.

The Public Library's Development of Information and Referral Service

Kahn's report stirred interest in creating an Information and Referral system in the United States. At the same time, urban public libraries were experiencing a major crisis. The middle class, traditionally the public library's major user group,[1] had largely left the inner city. Public librarians felt the need to adjust their services to suit the needs of the community around them. Information and Referral was seen by some as a way to make the public library a more useful (and, hopefully, more used) part of the community. In 1975, Joseph Donahue, head of the People's Information Center (PIC) project at Enoch Pratt Library, wrote:

> The library's interest in sponsoring the effort may be seen as a recognition of the changing conditions of urban life, and of resulting changes in the support base of libraries. The book-using middle class has, to a significant degree, deserted the city, leaving the continued viability of the urban public library in question. Nevertheless, people continue to need information; indeed, many kinds of information vital to survival in the urban environment cannot be found in books, and some important information is not in published form at all. It was therefore, appropriate for the library to extend its scope, in order to become a clearinghouse for information, regardless of the format in which such information is to be found.[2]

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[1] One of the findings published in Bernard Berelson, The Library's Public: A Report of the Public Library Inquiry (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949).

[2] Joseph Donahue, "Some Experiments Fail--The Public Information Center Project at the Enoch Pratt Free Library," Library Journal 100 (June 15, 1975):1185.

Some felt that Information and Referral would help the public library evolve to offer more services to the community. Lowell Martin in his article, "Future of the Main Urban Library" observed:

> The information field also provides an opportunity for the library to move beyond its passive role of gathering resources and then waiting for users to respond. Convenience of access characterizes all commodities in this age, and purveyors who do not achieve this will be bypassed. The step beyond provision is dissemination. . . . There is a significant difference between the general library which the public library has been and the special library it could become. One acquires and one waits; the other distributes information to an identified clientele.[1]

Projects

People's Information Center, 1970

In 1970, the first Information and Referral program sponsored by a public library opened. During the development of this project, librarians were faced with the problem of defining what part of Information and Referral fell within the scope of library work and what part belonged in the field of Social Welfare.

The structure of the PIC project reflected the hesitation of librarians to delve into social work. In Baltimore, the Health and Welfare Department ran an effective Information and Referral service. While in the planning

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[1] Lowell Martin, "Future of the Main Urban Library," in Future of the Main Urban Library, ed. Paxton Price (Los Cruces: Urban Libraries Council, 1978), p. 38.

stage, the library committee decided not to compete with or duplicate this existing service. Planners felt it would be more effective to support this service by taking over aspects which were considered library work and to refer patrons who need services beyond the librarians training to Health and Welfare. In his article, "Some Experiments Fail" Donahue summarized the Committee's thoughts:

> Much of the work of the Information and Referral service is beyond the competence of the library, involving as it does, highly sensitive casework, sometimes of a medical or psychiatric nature. However, other aspects of its work are purely informational involving the identification, collection, analysis, organization and dissemination of information. Much of what the Information and Referral service and the council's member agencies do in this area is really library work, involving operating special libraries, devising indexes, keeping data files and the like. . . . The Information and Referral service also scans newspapers and other publications for information about changes in the availability of social services in the community, thus to a large extent duplicating files kept in the library. . . . Also, it became clear that the library could do a great deal more to inform its clientele of the availability of social services in response to particular needs. Its central and branch libraries could offer many points of initial contact for persons who could be referred to appropriate services.[1]

The People's Information Center (PIC) was eventually discontinued at Enoch Pratt Library for a variety of reasons. A few of the reasons cited by Donahue are 1) the administration's failure to appoint full-time professional staff, 2) the administration's failure to publicize the service, and 3) the administration's failure to give the PIC direct

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[1]Donahue, p. 1186.

telephone access. Donahue concludes that "It [Information and Referral] cannot be done successfully without a sizeable commitment of resources. It is a mistake to begin it unless the commitment is strong enough that it is likely to be continued in lean times, when to do so would mean perhaps retrenchment elsewhere in the library's program."[1]

Neighborhood Information Center Project, 1976

Four years later, an Information and Referral demonstration project based on Kahn's recommendations and using Citizen's Advice Bureaux as a general model was implemented by five major libraries. The venture was called the Neighborhood Information Center (NIC) Project. Its original purpose was "to research the feasibility of the branch library as a neighborhood information center, and to present an implementation plan for establishing a demonstration center in each city."[2] According to Childers, its major objectives were:

> To demonstrate to neighborhood residents and the community at large that the urban public library can be a vital force in daily living, will provide free information and assistance, and that the library can adapt itself in non-traditional ways to meet the needs of those who have not previously used the public library services, and have neither experience, nor knowledge of the role a public library

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[1] Ibid., p. 1190.

[2] Thomas Childers, "The Neighborhood Information Center Projects," Library Quarterly 46, no. 3 (July 1976): 271.

> can play in the daily lives of the residents of a community; [and] to provide survival information or referral to people who may be in low income grackets [and] . . . who may have little or limited education.[1]

The consortium consisted of the public libraries of the cities of Atlanta, Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, and Queens. It was funded for three years under the (now defunct) Department of Education, Division of Library Programs.

The project began with each center developing a resource file. "The resource file [was] an organized, cross-indexed file of all services and programs in the area covered by the center. . . . This file [was] updated and modified on a continuing basis."[2] The resource file was the core of the referral service. If this was not complete and well-maintained the center would not function effectively.

Each center was developed separately, but with the same objectives. The five libraries agreed upon the basic structure of the Information and Referral service, yet the centers were not identical. ". . . the cities advised, followed through, followed up and reached out in varying degrees; all saw this as desirable and a natural element in a successful Information and Referral program."[3] Library services have always been tailored to local needs and priorities. It was thought wrong to impose a rigid structure

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[1]Ibid., p. 274.

[2]Ibid., p. 273.

[3]Ibid., p. 275.

on the project centers, though the variations make comparative evaluations difficult.

Education has always been a primary concern of the public library. The Neighborhood Information Centers reflect that tradition. Most of the centers offered information-oriented programs. "For example, Detroit presented a series of social service information programs for senior citizens, and Queens held workshops in income tax computation."[1]

The libraries did not confine services strictly to providing information. Some Neighborhood Information Centers became involved in offering new services to their patrons. "For instance, centers issued reduced fare cards for senior citizens; Houston made blood pressure tests available to patrons, and Atlanta provided voter registration services. . . ."[2]

Some aspects of the Information and Referral concept were not well-developed in any of the centers. "In all cities, escort service was infrequently provided; when it was offered, it was at the initiative of an individual library employee and most often at his expense in his own automobile."[3] The referral function was filled by "steering" the patron to the correct service.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

It has been suggested that the library attempt to provide crisis counseling to reach people when they most need accurate information. The libraries in this project did not attempt to address that issue. "Counseling was universally avoided. Those who commented on its appropriateness in a library based service, suggested that it was outside the range of librarianship."[1]

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[1]Ibid.

PREVIOUS WORK

Between 1970 and 1980, Information and Referral has been the subject of various articles and project services. There is no commonly accepted definition for Information and Referral in a public library setting. As Childers reports:

> To some librarians, Information and Referral is unique in a library setting and in no way resembles standard activities and services in libraries. To others it is nothing more than a minor variation on the theme of traditional reference service.[1]

In 1976, Luck and Croneberger offered a definition of Information and Referral, but in their article, "I & R = Reference," they acknowledge that the definition is not widely accepted by public librarians.

> The definition: Information and referral is the active process of linking a person with a need or problem with a service which will meet the need or solve the problem. The link between the person and the service is made up of information. It is because the success or failure of the information link depends on communication involving specific individuals in specific problem situations, that we emphasize that information and referral is a process not a product.[2]

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[1] Childers, "Trends in Public Library Information and Referral Services," p. 2035.

[2] Carolyn Luck and Robert Croneberger, "I & R = Reference," Library Journal 101 (January 15, 1976):318.

Their definition is consistent with the standards for Information and Referral published by the United Way.

The Public Library Association Guidelines published in 1980 incorporates this definition into a description of Information and Referral services. The publication provides guidelines to aid the development of Information and Referral. These guidelines provide a model of the delivery of Information and Referral services in a public library. The Guidelines suggest that the librarian works closely with the patron in order to resolve the patron's problem. The transaction begins with a standard reference interview, but may develop beyond that. According to the guidelines, a librarian should be prepared to become closely involved with an individual patron's problem.

> The I & R transaction with the user consists of effective listening and skillful interviewing in order to define questions or problems clearly; responding to a question or problem with the correct information or the most appropriate options among viable referrals; facilitating service provision by making a contact with an agency to arrange for services for the user; and/or follow-up by contacting the user or agency for assurance that the patron has obtained the desired service. Numerous factors may account for a non-productive referral, and the follow-up process affords the opportunity to update the file data.
>
> If productive service is not being provided, a form of advocacy may be undertaken by rearticulating the user's predicament to the agency. A satisfactory outcome may require re-evaluation of the problem and an exploration of alternative referrals. It is essential to pursue a problem until the patron is assured that all options have been exhausted. Throughout the total process strict

> confidentiality must be maintained and information provided in a neutral, non-judgmental manner.[1]

The PLA's concept of the delivery of an Information and Referral service is clearly related to the Information and Referral service model developed by the field of Social Welfare. The implementation of Information and Referral in public libraries does not seem to reflect this concept. Librarians do not seem to want to take an active role in solving a patron's problems. For example, none of the six major public libraries which created project Information and Referral services provided referral beyond "steering."[2]

Attempts to study the development of Information and Referral have been hampered by the lack of a concrete definition for such services in the library field. In 1978, Childers conducted a nationwide study of Information and Referral in public libraries. From the outset of the project the lack of a definition of Information and Referral and its role in a public library setting was a major concern for the researchers. Rather than constructing a precise definition of Information and Referral for the study, the researchers defined specific services which could be offered under this

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[1]Public Library Association Information and Referral Services Committee, Guidelines for Establishing I & R Services in Public Libraries. Type script. (Available from PLA headquarters in Chicago.) P. 6.

[2]Steering is defined by Childers in his 1976 study as "Steering: Giving information about where to go for a resource and information about how to secure it."

heading. Two levels of service were established, primary and secondary.[1]

There are four primary level services: simple information giving, complex information giving, constructing a public resource file, and referral. The team felt these activities were closely related to existing library practice. The first two services are not new activities for librarians. Simple information giving consists of directly answering the question which a patron asks. Complex information giving involves interviewing the patron to determine exactly what information he needs. Both of these activities have been established as part of traditional library service.

The remaining two services--constructing a public resource file and referral--have not generally been offered in public libraries. The public resource file is defined as a comprehensive index of all social services and programs available to the community. Its purpose is to help patrons and librarians locate services which exist outside the library. The resource file differs from a typical ready reference file in several ways; the most important of these differences is that the general public has direct access to the file. Childers found this to be a distinguishing characteristic of Information and Referral service. "This particular qualification may set it [the resource file] apart from the 'little file box of community organizations'

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[1]See Appendix A.

in the reference desk, that so many public libraries have kept for decades; and this may indicate some level of Information and Referral beyond traditional reference service."[1]

After consulting the file the next logical step is contacting the agency to determine if there is any available aid for the patron. Referral, in the sense of actively contacting an agency on the patron's behalf has rarely been offered as a standard service in a public library. Referral usually consists of steering the patron to the proper outside resource.

The secondary services--advice, advocacy, counseling, follow-up, escort, transportation, and feedback--describe a range of services beyond the traditional scope of reference work. Of these seven services, advice is the one most closely related to established library practice. It is not generally offered in public libraries; many librarians hesitate to advise patrons on their course of action. The librarians feel that it may misrepresent their expertise. They fear that the patron may be unable to distinguish between personal opinion and an authoritative recommendation.

Several of the other secondary services require additional specialized training for librarians and staff.

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[1]Childers, "Trends," p. 2036.

Advocacy and counseling are services which have traditionally been performed by people trained in Social Welfare Casework or a related field. In order to offer these services, librarians would need similar training. Escort and transportation are services which are further complicated by requiring special licenses and increased insurance fees.

Feedback and follow-up would not require additional training for the professional staff. Follow-up is probably done on an informal basis by many librarians. However, formally establishing these services would require a large scale commitment of staff time and money. In order for either service to be effective, cooperation on the part of the patrons would be essential.

These two levels of services were used as a checklist for the survey conducted by Childers' research team. They ". . . decided to enumerate the various services that can be offered under the heading 'I & R' and simply count the libraries that claim to be providing these services on a regular basis."[1]

The preliminary results indicated that only 13 percent of public libraries offer even one of the secondary or non-traditional services that the researchers described. At the same time, 68 percent of public librarians describe themselves as offering Information and Referral. The preliminary report does not make strong statements about what the final analysis of the data will show. Childers

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[1] Ibid.

concludes the article with a very general statement about Information and Referral in public libraries.

> Looking very broadly at the date, I & R still seems to be an innovation. The spread of activities that are called "I & R" is very wide; there are major problems in getting I & R accepted in a given library; the field generally, has yet to give whole-hearted endorsement to I & R and there seems to be considerable innovation going on in the delivery of I & R.[1]

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[1]Ibid., p. 2037.

CURRENT RESEARCH

Library Services Survey, 1983

The Library Services Survey is a recently completed study designed to discover whether or not the services described by the Childers' study (1979) are perceived by librarians in the Chicago metropolitan area to be services which a public library should offer.[1]

The study used a convenient sample of reference librarians working in public libraries in the suburbs of Chicago. The two major library systems which cover these are the Suburban Library System and the North Suburban Library System. The Suburban Library System is the larger of the two with seventy-one member libraries.[2] The North Suburban System has forty-three member libraries.[3] Using the members of both systems resulted in a sample small enough to cover within the resources of this project and yet large enough to reflect the diversity of budgets,

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[1] See Appendix B for questionnaire.

[2] This figure excludes non-public library members of this system.

[3] This figure excludes non-public library members of this system.

community types, and variety of services found in the general population of public libraries.

The survey consisted of thirteen questions. Questions 1 - 11b were statements based on the services Childers' research described. The respondent was asked to rate a statement describing each of these services on a Lickert scale.[1] A rating of 1 or 2 indicated a positive attitude towards offering the service. A rating of 4 or 5 indicated some objection to the service.

Question 12 asked the respondent if he/she thinks Information and Referral is appropriate in a public library. Question 13 asked if the respondent thinks that Information and Referral differs from reference services and if so, how it differs.

The responses to this survey gave some indication as to whether or not Information and Referral is a strongly supported innovation in public libraries. It was expected that the primary level, or traditional services, would receive positive ratings from a large proportion of librarians; these services are closely related to established library practice. The secondary level, or non-traditional services were expected to receive much more varied ratings; these services were distinctly Information

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[1]A standard scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

and Referral type services and were not part of the traditional range of library services.

The questionnaire and a cover letter were sent to the head reference librarian at each library in the sample. The cover letter gave a brief description of the study and assured the respondent that all the data will remain confidential. In the cover letter, the respondent was reminded not to answer in terms of his/her library's implementing the service, but in terms of what he/she thought could be done.

Two weeks after the initial mailing, reminder postcards were sent to non-respondents. At that point 70 percent of the responses were received. Two weeks later, those who had made no response were contacted by telephone. Not all of those contacted wanted to participate in the study. Of the 14 non-respondents, 8 were too busy to complete the survey, 2 had policies which prevented them from responding to any survey and 4 said they would return the completed survey but did not.

The results of this study are specific to the sample population. However, the responses of these reference librarians reinforce Childers' findings.

The Results

Each statement on the questionnaire was based on a service or an aspect of a service which Childers described

as Information and Referral related in his 1979 study. The statement, the service it describes, and the rating it received are listed below in the order that they appeared on the original questionnaire.[1]

Statement 1: "Provide any patron upon request, with name and phone number of a social agency" (Simple Information Giving). Ninety-three of the respondents or 88 percent, strongly agreed that librarians should perform this service.[2]

Statement 2: "Interview the patron to determine his exact information needs" (Complex Information Giving). Eighty-six of the respondents, 81 percent, strongly agreed that librarians should perform this service.

Statement 3: "Provide the patron with evaluations of social service agencies from a reliable outside source" (Advice). The responses were mixed. A majority, 45 percent, agreed with this statement, but a considerable number, 35 percent rated this 3--a neutral point on the scale.

Statement 4: "Evaluate social service agencies for the patron based on library research" (Advice). Sixty-three respondents, 59 percent, strongly disagreed with this statement. A significant number, 22 percent, rated this statement 3 on the five-point scale.

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[1]The full data is reported in Appendix C, Table 1.

[2]Because the number of responses is so close to 100, raw numbers are included with percentages. The total number of responses was 106.

Statement 5: "Negotiate with an agency, on a patron's behalf, to obtain services" (Advocacy). This statement received a strongly negative rating; 25 percent of the respondents disagreed and 60 percent strongly disagreed.

Statement 6: "Contact an agency in order to make an appointment for a patron" (Referral). The response to this statement was very similar to the response to statement five; 25 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement and 60 percent strongly disagreed.

Statement 7: "Transport a patron to a social service agency." Ninety-two percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. No respondent rated this statement 1 or 2.[1]

Statement 8: "Contact the patron after the initial referral, to insure that he is satisfied" (Follow-up). Sixty-seven respondents or 63 percent, strongly disagreed that librarians should perform this service.

Statement 9: "Counsel the patron about personal problems (e.g., alcoholism, drug abuse)" (Counseling). This statement was strongly disagreed with by 90 percent of the respondents.[2]

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[1] As defined in the proposal for this study, a rating of 1 (strongly agree) or 2 (agree) is considered to be a positive rating.

[2] Some comments written by respondents indicated that librarians are not trained to perform this service.

Statement 10: "Collect information on the community through library sponsored services for distribution to social service agencies and community planners" (Feedback). This statement received a positive response; 37 respondents or 35 percent agreed with the statement. Nearly as many respondents, 36 or 34 percent placed this service at the neutral point on the scale.

Statement 11a: "Develop reference files or directories of community resources (e.g., social agencies, workshops, organizations, etc.)" (Constructing a Public Resource File). Most respondents (80 percent) strongly agreed that librarians should perform this service.

Statement 11b: "If such a file or directory is created, patrons should have direct access to this tool" (Constructing a Public Resource File). Eighty-five percent of the respondents agreed that the public should have direct access to such a file.

Question 12: "Do you think that, in general, Information and Referral is appropriate for public libraries?" Eighty-one percent of the respondents answer yes to this question.[1]

Question 13a: "Do you think Information and Referral differs significantly from reference services?" The majority of the respondents (67 percent) thought there

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[1]Out of ninety-four clear responses, eight respondents qualified their answers; four respondents made no attempt to answer this question.

is no significant difference between reference services and Information and Referral.[1]

Question 13b: "If yes, what do you think makes Information and Referral distinct from reference services?" The many well thought out responses to this question will be discussed later in this paper.

Discussion

A brief look at the data reveals that very few of the services Childers' team used to describe Information and Referral are strongly supported by the librarians in the sample. There are two convenient ways to divide the data for closer examination. First, it is interesting to group the data into the levels which Childers uses, primary and secondary. Second, it is useful to compare those services which received a positive rating to those services which received negative ratings.

Primary vs. Secondary Levels

The primary level, or traditional services, are Simple Information Giving, Complex Information Giving, Constructing a Public Resource File, and Referral

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[1]Of the thirty-one respondents which think that there is a significant difference between I & R and reference service, thirteen feel that it is not an appropriate service for the public library to offer.

(Statement numbers 1, 2, 11[a & b] and 6 respectively). Of all these statements only Referral (statement 6) received a negative rating. The three other services received strong positive ratings, indicating that they are thought to be important services for librarians to offer to the community.

The secondary level, or non-traditional, services are advice, advocacy, feedback, counseling, transportation/escort, and follow-up (Statement numbers 3, 4, 5, 10, 9, 7, and 8). These services generally received negative ratings. Two of the statements (3 & 4) were based on "advice." Statement 4, which presented an active form of advice received a negative rating. Statement 3, which presented advice as a passive act received a positive rating.[1] Feedback (statement 10) was the only other secondary service to receive a positive rating. However, the large number of neutral responses indicates that the service is not given a high priority by the respondents.

After grouping the data in this way (2 levels), one could conclude that the primary level services are supported by the respondents, but that would be a very superficial summary of the results.

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[1]Statement 3 presents advice as the act of providing an evaluation from an outside source. Statement 4 presents advice as actively evaluating services for the patron.

Positive vs. Negative[1] Ratings

If one examines the services which received positive ratings (regardless of level), one can see some revealing trends. Simple Information Giving, Complex Information Giving, Constructing a Public Resource File, Advice (passive aspect) and Feedback can all be classified as information services. They are all fairly conventional activities for the reference staff of a public library and do not involve the librarian in a close relationship with the patron.

Conversely, the services which received negative ratings (transportation/escort, counseling, advice (active), advocacy, follow-up) are generally non-traditional services, requiring the librarian to establish a close working relationship with an individual patron. Transportation/ Escort and Counseling are the least favored of these services and they would require the most individualized attention if they were to be offered by librarians.

The data reveal that the respondents do not support the establishment of non-traditional services in public libraries. When the responses to question 12 (whether Information and Referral is an appropriate service) and question 13a (whether there is a significant difference between Information and Referral and reference service) are

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[1]A negative rating was defined in the proposal for this study as a rating of 4 or 5 on the Lickert scale.

taken into account there is no significant change in how the services are rated. Those who felt Information and Referral service was appropriate for a public library to offer did not rate the statements differently from those who thought Information and Referral was not appropriate. The respondents who thought Information and Referral was not significantly different from reference service had similar responses to those who felt there was a difference between the two.[1]

This result could be attributed in large part to the current lack of a widely accepted definition for Information and Referral in a public library setting. The phrase Information and Referral has many different interpretations. This becomes more obvious when one reads the comments and the responses to question 13b.

Most respondents (sixty-four) felt that Information and Referral was an appropriate service for public libraries to offer and that there was no significant difference between Information and Referral and reference services. Their comments reflect the view that "Information and Referral is reference." One respondent explained, "To me, it's an extention of traditional reference service, but a difference only in degree." Another respondent provided more detail. "No basic difference--both are information acts. There is a

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[1]See Appendix C, Tables 2, 3, 4.

difference in Information and Referral to a correct helping agency and in doing counseling or transporting a patron. We see this as the function of a social worker or a social welfare agency. We provide legal and medical books, but we do not interpret them." From these comments and others included in Appendix C, it appears that most respondents favor the traditional role of the library as an information center and use "referral" to describe what Childers defined as "steering" the act of providing the patron with information about alternatives.

Several of the comments revealed that some respondents are concerned with the limits of a librarian's expertise and expressed reluctance to perform a more active version of referral. For some, "referral infers making a judgment--reference means providing information on an objective basis," and "referral services are inappropriate for a librarian to make in any field (law, social science, medicine, etc.)--we can only provide listings and unbiased evaluations and let the patrons make their choice. Referrals can be interpreted as recommendations while reference is providing sources of information without controlling the patron's choice."

One brief essay written by a respondent serves as an excellent summary of the major factors affecting the acceptance of Information and Referral services as Childers described them. The major considerations for this librarian are 1) community needs, 2) funding, 3) staff training and

4) quality of the service. The essay emphasizes that good basic reference service is needed by every community. The writer sees referral as a "frill" which would take time and funding away from basic services, unless there is an acute need for such a service.

> Information and Referral is very, very expensive. The information aspect is definitely a reference service and should be offered by every library regardless of size. How elaborate, how searching this should be depends on funding. The referral aspect of I & R causes me to answer #12 with a "no." Few libraries beyond large public libraries with federal or state grants can afford the full-time clerical staff and the professional full-time staffing an I & R desk needs. Indeed, few librarians are properly trained to "counsel" or even to "negotiate" on behalf of patrons. As part of a regular reference desk, few libraries can now afford the time away from the constantly ringing telephone or hoards of walk-in patrons needing the traditional, basic library services (and which everyone agrees we should provide). I & R must be provided at a separate desk staffed all the hours that the library is open. It can't be done adequately "on the run" at the reference desk. Information providing can and should be just another reference service. Information gathering should (but often isn't due to lack of staff-time) part of reference service also. Referral and follow-up evaluation is not a basic reference service, but a "frill"--a good often needed frill, but still not part of a basic "message," the mandate we receive from the public. If funded by outside sources of if determined by the public (through appointed or elected Boards of Directors) to be a basic need for a particular community, it should receive priority and extra funding. For librarians to decide to divert funds in tight money times to provide this service would sacrifice the amount and quality of services the public does expect. That is not responsible librarianship.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Information and Referral provided by the Childers' study (1979) and the PLA Guidelines, is not reflected by the responses to the Library Services Survey (LSS) reported in this thesis. The Childers' study suggested a wide range of services which might be Information and Referral related. The librarians surveyed expressed a fairly conservative view of what services a librarian should offer. The response to the LSS indicates that only traditional, information related services are supported by the librarians in the sample.

The majority of respondents to the LSS (67 percent) do not think that there is a significant difference between Information and Referral and reference service. This finding is underlined by Childers' preliminary finding that 68 percent of the librarians he studied in 1979, described themselves as offering an Information and Referral service. However, these librarians did not offer any non-traditional I & R services to the communities they serviced. Much of the problem with determining what constitutes Information and Referral service comes from a lack of one accepted definition.

At face value, the majority opinion is that Information and Referral equals reference service; this could make one wonder about the significance of the phrase Information and Referral. When Information and Referral was first proposed as a possible library service, it was suggested as a response to community needs. This has continued to be mentioned in conjunction with Information and Referral. For example, Clara S. Jones, author of Public Library Information and Referral Service, wrote in 1979: "Information and referral service in public libraries merits serious consideration as an important expansion of reference service that satisfies common everyday information needs. In the evolution of library practice I & R has emerged as a logical response to a demonstrated need for non-book information about community resources."[1]

The Library Services Survey developed by this study provides several comments from respondents which indicated that the difference between Information and Referral and reference service is "the community aspect" and that "Information and Referral is a more personal service."

This suggests that the phase Information and Referral could be indicative of a re-dedication of the public library to serve the community. The public library has

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[1]Clara S. Jones, ed., Public Library Information and Referral Service (Syracuse: Gaylard Bros. Inc., 1978), p. 17.

always been responsive to the needs of the community. Kahn's 1961 study demonstrated the community's need for an information center. The public library has responded to that need in a traditional way. As Jessie Shera observed, in 1949:

> Judged by every standard and measured by every criterion, the public library is revealed as a social agency dependent upon the objectives of society. It followed--it did not create--social change . . . the library, in common with all social agencies, moved through alternate periods of fluidity and convention but always responded, in greater or lesser degree to its environment.[1]

For most librarians surveyed by LSS, Information and Referral does not seem to represent a departure from traditional service. Perhaps the phrase Information and Referral is used to indicate a greater awareness of the public library's traditional role as an information center for the community. Support for this statement will come only from further research into what librarians mean when they use the phrase Information and Referral.

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[1] Jessie Shera. Foundations of the Public Library (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1949), p. 248.

APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were used by Childers in "Trends in Public Library Information and Referral Services" (1979), to describe services which could be offered by a library sponsored I & R project. The services were divided into two levels, primary and secondary. The researchers felt those services labeled primary were closely related to existing library services. Secondary services were seen as less commonly found in the library setting. These definitions and levels were created to facilitate the study of I & R service by serving as a checklist for the study.

Primary Level Services

Simple Information Giving: Provide the inquirer with the asked for information on outside resources, such as phone numbers, addresses, contact persons, etc., without further probing.

Complex Information Giving: Give the same information as above, after probing to determine the inquirer's real underlying need.

Constructing a Public Resource File: Construct a file or directory of outside resources and make it available for the inquirer to consult.

Referral: Actively help the client make contact with an outside resource by making an appointment, calling an agency, etc.

Secondary Level Services

Advice: Provide evaluations of the outside resources that are available; or help the client choose a course of action to reach needed resources.

Advocacy: Work to overcome obstacles that the inquirer encounters in trying to secure help from outside resource agencies.

Counseling: Help the client work out personal problems (without necessarily using outside resources); requires deep probing of a complex personal situation such as alcoholism, emotional crises, family disputes, etc.

Escort: Provide--not simply arrange for--someone to accompany an inquirer to outside resources.

Feedback: From the insights or data gained through I & R services, provide formal feedback on social service needs to politicians, planners, social agencies, etc.

Follow-up: Make sure the inquirer has reached the proper outside resources or has gotten the proper help.

Transportation: Provide--not simply arrange for--transportation for the client to outside resources.

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

February 21, 1983

Dear Reference Librarian,

Please take a few minutes of your time to fill out the attached questionnaire. Some of the services it describes are offered in many public libraries; some are rarely offered. We would like to know what your opinion is as to whether librarians should perform these services.

Let me stress that this survey is not an attempt to ascertain whether or not your library offers the described services, but rather to ascertain to what degree reference librarians believe Information and Referral (I&R) is important in public libraries.

I am conducting this survey as part of the thesis requirement for a Master's Degree at the University of Chicago Graduate Library School. I hope you will participate in the study. All responses will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sarah Faith O'Brien

Ms. Sarah F. O'Brien
5311 S. Harper Ave.
Chicago, IL 60615

LIBRARY SERVICES SURVEY

Please use the following scale to indicate how strongly you feel the activity described is a service which librarians should provide. (Answer regardless of whether the library you are currently working in provides this service.)

1) Provide any patron upon request, with the name and phone number of a social agency.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

2) Interview the patron to determine his exact information needs.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

3) Provide the patron with evaluations of social service agencies from a reliable outside source.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

4) Evaluate social service agencies for the patron based on library research.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

5) Negotiate with an agency, on a patron's behalf, to obtain services.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

6) Contact an agency in order to make an appointment for a patron.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

7) Transport a patron to a social service agency.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

8) Contact the patron, after the initial referral, to insure that he is satisfied.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

9) Counsel the patron about personal problems (ex. alcoholism, drug abuse).

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

10) Collect information on the community through library sponsored services for distribution to social service agencies and community planners.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

11a) Develop reference files or directories of community resources (ex. social agencies, workshops, organizations, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

11b) If such a file or directory is created, patrons should have direct access to this tool.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly agree Strongly disagree

12) Do you think that, in general, Information and Referral is appropriate for public libraries?

_____Yes _____No

13a) Do you think Information and Referral differs significantly from reference services?

_____Yes _____No

13b) If YES, what do you think makes Information and Referral distinct from reference services?

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it to me in the stamped self-addressed envelope provided.

Return to:

Sarah Faith O'Brien
5311 S. Harper Ave.
Chicago, IL., 60615

APPENDIX C

DATA

8	Follow-up	1	9	9	11	16	67	78 2/NA
7	Transportation/escort	0	0	0	0	8	98	100
9	Counseling	0	0	0	1	6	96	96 3/NA

NA = No Answer

Q 12: "Do you think that, in general, Information and Referral is appropriate for public libraries?"

76 yes 81% 18 no 19% 8/NA

13a: "Do you think Information and Referral differs significantly from reference service?"

31 yes 33% 63 no 67% 8/NA

13b: "If yes, what do you think makes Information and Referral different from reference services?"

Approximately 45 respondents included comments in this area.

TABLE 2

RESPONSES OF THOSE WHO THINK I & R IS APPROPRIATE AND IT IS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM REFERENCE SERVICE (13 TOTAL RESPONSES)

Statement Number	Service	Strongly Agree 1	2	Percent (1 & 2)	3	Strongly Disagree 4	5	Percent (4 & 5)
1	Simple Information Giving	10	3	100	0	0	0	0
2	Complex Information Giving	10	1	85	1	1	0	7
11a	Constructing a Resource File	9	2	85	2	0	0	0
11b	Making the Resource File Public	9	4	100	0	0	0	0
6	Referral	0	2	15	1	1	9	77
3	Advice (passive)	4	2	46	5	0	1	7
4	Advice (Active)	0	1	7	3	2	6	61 1/NA
5	Advocacy	0	2	15	1	1	9	77
10	Feedback	3	3	46	3	2	1	23
7	Transportation/escort	0	0	0	0	1	12	100
9	Counseling	0	0	0	0	2	11	100

TABLE 3

RESPONSES OF THOSE WHO THINK I & R IS APPROPRIATE AND IT IS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM REFERENCE SERVICE
(61 TOTAL RESPONSES)

Statement Number	Service	Strongly Agree 1	2	Percent (1 & 2)	3	4	Strongly Disagree 5	Percent (4 & 5)
1	Simple Information Giving	58	3	100	0	0	0	0
2	Complex Information Giving	51	8	97	0	1	1	3
11a	Constructing a Resource File	54	5	97	2	0	0	0
11b	Making the Resource File Public	48	8	91	3	0	0	0
6	Referral	1	3	7	8	18	31	80
3	Advice (Passive)	13	17	49	24	4	3	11
4	Advice (Active)	3	4	11	23	11	19	49 1/NA
5	Advocacy	1	2	5	6	21	31	85
10	Feedback	11	17	46	26	3	0	5 4/NA
7	Transportation/escort	0	0	0	0	4	0	100
9	Counseling	0	0	0	0	1	60	100

TABLE 4

RESPONSES OF THOSE WHO THINK I & R IS NOT APPROPRIATE AND IT IS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM REFERENCE SERVICE
(18 TOTAL RESPONSES)

Statement Number	Service	Strongly Agree 1	2	Percent (1 & 2)	3	4	Strongly Disagree 5	Percent (4 & 5)
1	Simple Information Giving	13	1	78	3	1	0	5
2	Complex Information Giving	14	2	88	1	0	1	5
11a	Constructing a Resource File	11	3	78	4	0	0	0
11b	Making the Resource File Public	11	2	78	4	0	1	5
6	Referral	0	0	0	0	3	15	100
3	Advice (Passive)	1	6	39	4	0	7	39
4	Advice (Active)	0	1	5	2	4	11	83
5	Advocacy	0	0	0	1	1	16	94
10	Feedback	3	6	59	4	3	2	28
7	Transportation/escort	0	0	0	0	1	17	100
9	Counseling	0	0	0	1	0	17	94

Comments

The following comments are the responses to Question 13b. Some respondents included comments, although they did not respond yes to Question 13a. All the comments which were written on the survey are included here.

Strong emphasis on local sources of information. Also, library should engage in more activities to link person with organizations that can help provide info.

It is the difference between being personal and impersonal (more neutral). Referral requires much more knowledge in some ways, I believe.

Information and Referral has to do with the community. Reference is material in library facility.

Reference services provide names and sources of information. Referral attempts to be directly helpful to the patron.

Information and Referral is a more personal service.

Difficulty.

The word "Referral" is the difference! This is an additional step and many times the most time consuming.

Information and Referral may deal with a patron's personal life much more than simple reference work.

The community aspect.

I & R is basically a person or place source, and does not supply an immediate (if ever) answer as opposed to a book or material source which [?] give exact answers.

I think I & R is for the transferral of up-to-date accurate information. I consider reference to be more in-depth working with a patron--much broader in scope--evaluative--follow-up is involved, etc.

I & R provides the patron with a source for information, not the actual information sought.

Libraries supply the information about agency services. The social service agencies provide the services. [Re: Q9]--Other agencies available for this.

No basic difference--both are information acts. There is a difference in Information and Referral to a correct helping agency and in doing counseling or transporting a patron. We see this as the function of a social worker or social welfare agency. We provide legal and medical books but we do not interpret them.

I & R is reference.

To me it's an extension of traditional reference service, but a difference only in degree.

Nothing. All reference questions should be researched whether of social value or otherwise.

Is Information and Referral a specific name of a specific program or is it all of the above types of services? Or--would it be each librarian's concept of what reference should be?

Q12--Depends on how far you go--see answers to questions 1 thru 3--that's as far as I think any library should go.

Q13a yes--we are not social workers or health care professionals. Connecting a patron with an organization is our job--we should not go beyond that.

Q12--Info. and Referral--Yes Q12a--Info. and Referral--no

No yes

Referral services are inappropriate for a librarian to make in any field (law, social service, medicine, etc.)--we can only provide listings and unbiased evaluations and let the patrons make their choice. Referrals can be interpreted as recommendations while reference is providing sources of information without controlling the patron's choice.

Q13b--It may, depending on the level of referral the patron expects.

Referral infers making a judgment--reference means providing information on an objective basis.

Q12--Info (yes) Referral (no). Q13a yes.

Q12--What do you mean by referral? Q12a--Only if you mean the library should become an advocate service which I do not think it should. Q13b--Please if you want an answer define your terms. Without knowing your meaning but only guessing, I believe a librarian is not trained (?) for social service in the way psychiatric social workers or counselors are.

Q13b no answer--If defined as you infer with questions to counsel, transport--etc. They would definitely differ and I don't agree with that as the library's purpose/role.

Referral implies a qualitative judgment on the part of the library--this is the patron's role, not the library's.

It is the job of the reference librarian to gather information and make it available to the patron, but not to evaluate this information and make referrals.

Information and Referral is a very much more personal service than reference service. Social referral should be handled by an agency that does nothing else. A large library with staff working on this only may be able to handle it, however, most libraries would have more than one staff member involved--also those staff members are members of the same or neighboring communities therefore confidentiality (which is very important) is apt to be not what it should be.

More personal involvement with the patron. Demands more counseling skills than traditional reference work.

I believe information and reference to be parallel functions. Referral, however, goes beyond informing a patron that a particular agency exists. The librarian's mission is to provide information without making a judgment for the patron, as to the choice or option he or she is to choose.

Information services such as compiling lists, directories, assembling files, etc. which are available for public use is a reference service. A librarian assumes responsibility for the well being of the patron when giving advice or counsel or directing a patron to one source. This service is not in the area of library expertise. It should be attended to by a trained social worker.

I & R has a social work aspect that is not found in straight reference service.

Referral implies extensive knowledge and background. Referral as explained above should be handled by expert [sic] in Social Services, e.g., counselor; Psychologist; Social Worker.

The referral--most librarians are not social workers.

The library is an educational institution, not a social agency, therefore, it should not give referral service. Librarians are not social workers.

The chief thrust of the library should revolve around printed material and the purpose of reference service is to facilitate access to its use. I and R often extends into areas that are not the library's domain--there are other agencies and institutions that exist for those needs.

Items listed in questions 3-10, I perceive these as services of an I & R center.

We are not qualified to make judgments on the needs of patrons in this area.

I & R is very, very expensive. The information aspect is definitely a reference service and should be offered by every library regardless of size. How elaborate, how searching this should be depends on funding. The Referral aspect of I & R causes me to answer 12) with a "no." Few libraries beyond large public libraries with federal or state grants can afford the full-time clerical staff and the professional full-time staffing an I & R desk needs. Indeed, few librarians are properly trained to "counsel" or even to "negotiate" on behalf of patrons. As part of a regular reference desk, few libraries can now afford the time away from the constantly ringing telephone or hoards of walk-in patrons needing the traditional, basic library services (and which everyone agrees we should provide). I & R must be provided at a separate desk staffed all the hours the library is open. It can't be done adequately "on the run" at a regular desk. Information providing can and should be just another reference service. Information gathering should (but often isn't due to lack of staff time) be part of reference service also. Referral and follow-up evaluation is not a basic reference service but a "frill"--a good, often needed frill, but still not part of basic "message," the mandate we receive from the public. If funded by outside sources as if determined by the public (though appointed or elected Boards of Directors) to be a basic need for a particular community, it should receive priority and extra funding. For librarians to decide to divert funds in tight money times to provide this service would sacrifice the amount and quality of services the public does expect. That is not responsible librarianship.

Comments on q 3-7. This is not something a Reference librarian should be involved in.

Q12 No--not when counseling or evaluation of social services is involved. Q13b--If the term "Information and Referral" means referring a patron to a specific social service agency and the librarian is involved in guidance and counseling, then this is not reference work per se. Librarians provide information, not counseling not interpretation.

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